Winners of 2018 LiFE Awards for Excellence in Suicide Prevention Announced at National Conference

Adelaide, South Australia: Suicide Prevention Australia is delighted to announce recipients of the 2018 LiFE Awards for Excellence in Suicide Prevention.

LiFE Award Judging Committee Chair and Suicide Prevention Australia Director Dr Vanessa Lee said of the awards and recipients:

“We were so impressed with the diversity and quality of nominations this year showcasing the exciting, innovative and inclusive range of programs being undertaken within the field.”

“The nominees ranged from mainstream programs to local ‘grass roots’ organisations and dedicated individuals. The Awards celebrate the commitment and energy of the nominees and their vital contribution to the wellbeing of all Australian communities.”

Many congratulations to the 2018 LiFE Award Winners:

- Leadership Award Category – Jorgen Gullestrup
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award Category – Babana Aboriginal
- Communities Matter Award Category (Individual) – Joe Williams
- Communities Matter Award Category (Organisation) – Far North Queensland Suicide Prevention Taskforce
- Emerging Researcher Award Category – Alison Kennedy
- Media Award Category – Dannielle Williams
- Workplace Award Category – Huon Aquaculture

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About the Winners

Leadership Category – Jorgen Gullestrup

In the suicide prevention sector, it is not often that we get to talk about tradies, but tonight, the Board of SPA wanted to honour a plumber by trade. Starting his career in the construction industry, Jorgen saw first-hand the impact of suicide on the workers, their families and friends.

Following the 2006 AISRAP investigation into suicide in the Queensland Commercial Building and Construction industry, Jorgen (who, at the time was State Secretary of the Plumbers Union) decided it was time to take action to save the lives of construction workers.

Ten years ago, with the help of the Building Employees Redundancy Trust, Jorgen worked together with the construction industry to develop the MATES in Construction program. MATES vision is to be Australia’s leading industry suicide prevention organisation focusing on raising awareness, building capacity, providing help and research.

Within the first five years of operation, an 8% reduction in Queensland construction industry suicide rates was achieved. Jorgen has presided over the expansion of the program from Queensland which is now reaching over 138,000 workers across four Australian States.

Following the completion of his Masters in Suicidology, he recently won a Churchill Fellowship to investigate and understand approaches to workplace suicide prevention and mental health globally in countries such as Switzerland, Denmark, UK, USA, and New Zealand.

Into all of his conversations with colleagues, businesses, unions and community, Jorgen brings a mix of his personal experience with suicidal behaviour, his practical nature and a passion for positive change. His leadership has changed the landscape of the entire construction industry in how they train and support their apprentices, and saved many lives and much grief for families, friends and colleagues.

Jorgen has never lost sight of measuring the impact of the MATES in Construction program, resulting in a scalable suicide intervention model that is now translating into the mining sector and inspiring other industries.

From Plumber to Suicidologist and ‘change maker’, the SPA board is proud to acknowledge Jorgen Gullestrup with this year’s LiFE award for Excellence in Leadership.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Category – Babana Aboriginal

Babana Aboriginal has a track record of building big things from little things. Starting as a small group of Aboriginal men sitting around a tree in Redfern Park more than a decade ago the organisation is now at the forefront of Indigenous matters in the local community.

Suicide prevention came to prominence as an issue for the Men’s Group three years ago when the members decided to host what is now an annual Indigenous Suicide Prevention Awareness Day. Focussing on bringing light to the challenge of suicide in communities, the awareness events provide insight and information and critical linkages to service providers who can help the members and those in their communities who are troubled and may be vulnerable to suicide. The first event attracted around a hundred people, largely drawn from the local community. The second event doubled in attendees this time drawing people from the broader community including from Western Sydney. In 2017 more than 300 attended from across the State of NSW.

Built on the tradition of more than 40,000 years of story-telling - hearing stories from those who have walked the journey of suicide better influences people to respond and change behaviour – the events have been the catalyst for the development of two programs. The “How to have a yarn” tool kit which has now been downloaded more than 40,000 times and the building of an Indigenous Suicide Prevention Peer to Peer to Support Network.

We present Mark Spinks with a LiFE Award tonight and commend Babana Aboriginal for all of their achievements and their ongoing efforts to reduce suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Communities Matter Category (Individual) Winner Joe Williams

Joe Williams is a proud Wiradjuri First Nations man who not only educates on suicide prevention and mental wellbeing, but also proudly shares his Aboriginal Culture. He speaks of how being spiritually connected and living by the four core values of Love, Care, Respect & Humility he has managed to heal and overcome the adversity he has faced as an Aboriginal man living with mental illness and suicidal ideation.

Joe was invited to deliver his 'The Enemy Within' sessions in the remote West Australian community of Carnarvon in conjunction with the local Aboriginal Medical Service. Over three days Joe delivered sessions to various community groups. His ability to connect with such a diverse range of people stems from his own personal pain which he describes in an honest and raw way.

This program has had a lasting impact on the community resulting in invitations to return to the community on multiple occasions. Communities see first-hand the significant contribution Joe is

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making in the suicide prevention sector in Australia and how he is improving the lives of First Nations people through his work.

Communities Matter Category (Organisation) – Far North Queensland Suicide Prevention Taskforce

In June 1995 the Far NQ Taskforce for the Prevention of Youth Suicide was formed in response to the alarming youth suicide rates in the region. Subsequently, to be responsive to the needs of all age groups in the community, they became the “FNQ Suicide Prevention Taskforce”. The Taskforce, a project of the Dr Edward Koch Foundation, has a volunteer membership including government, service providers, and community-based representatives (80+ agencies & individuals) and their objectives span suicide prevention, intervention and postvention, and take into account economic, political, social and cultural factors.

Since its formation many community initiatives have been implemented by the Taskforce. Most recently an innovative approach in response to the 2017 Netflix series ‘13 Reasons Why’ was developed.

Concerned that the series was a possible trigger for young people at risk, a social media campaign, 365 Reasons Why Not was launched via the Taskforce’s Facebook page with young people providing quotes on reasons to live and continuing the dialogue with a post every day. The 365ReasonsWhyNot project received a local award from the Cairns Hinterland Consumers and Carers Advisory Group for innovation and is a solid demonstration of the Taskforce ability to adapt to changing environments using new forms of media.

Over its 22 years of operation the Far North Queensland Suicide Prevention Taskforce has anticipated and responded to community need and the context in which they operate. It is recognised as a trusted community source of information and assistance, changing things by solid, practical achievement.

Emerging Researcher Category – Alison Kennedy

After living and working in rural communities for 15 years, Alison commenced her research career in 2010 at the National Centre for Farmer Health. She was awarded a University of New England PhD Scholarship and received the Chancellor's Doctoral Research Medal upon graduation. Alison’s doctoral research was a mixed method study examining the experience of suicide and accidental-death bereavement for rural farming families.

Alison has attracted international recognition for her work including the American Association of Suicidology grant supporting research in the area of suicide postvention. Alison was instrumental in

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securing funding for the Ripple Effect an award-winning online suicide prevention project. The success of this project has led to an international collaborative partnership with the University of Hamburg-Eppendorf and during this year she will take up an Academic Study Placement to work with the University of Kentucky.

The Ripple Effect uses digital media to convey lived experience, education and personal challenges to reduce stigma. It questions current best-practice suicide stigma assessment and has informed new directions for adopting behavioural indicators of stigma. Her work on the Ripple Effect has featured in numerous print and online articles, radio interviews, television interviews and social media reaching regional, state, national and international audiences and ensuring her work extends beyond hallowed halls of academia.

Currently Alison’s research work includes being the primary investigator on 'From Inside the Farm Gate: Rural Women's Stories of Thriving and Surviving' and AgSPACE-a collaborative project with the Victorian Coroner’s Court to improve suicide prevention efforts in rural farming communities.

Media Category – Dannielle Williams
Dannielle Miller is an experienced educator, author and media commentator with a special focus on young people drawn from her experience as an educator.

For the last 12 months in particular she has been a leading voice in the media responding to reports of youth suicide. Her social media reach and efforts to promote the Mindframe national guidelines after news broke of the passing of young "Dolly" Everett went viral. This was followed by a thoughtful piece published by Women’s Agenda explaining why we must carefully consider how we discuss suicide: "Why I’m not publicly commenting on the tragic passing of teen girl Dolly Everett".

Since the magazine’s launch issue, Dannielle has also written a number of features for Stellar magazine (glossy in the Sunday papers, readership 3 million). These aim to promote positive mental health and prevent male suicide including articles such as:

- “Do real men cry? How redefining masculinity can save lives”
- "Everybody makes mistakes"
- A profile with Sydney Swans AFL Captain Josh Kennedy "Men need to admit they aren’t bulletproof".

This year she was one of four Finalists for the NSW Premier’s, Woman of the Year Award. This recognised her strong advocacy for teens and the innovative programs she has designed for them. It also acknowledged her work in the media as a voice of both compassion for vulnerable groups, and of caution in the ways in which we discuss our worries over youth suicide.

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Dannielle is recognised tonight for her continued adherence to, and advocacy of, the National Mindframe guidelines for safe reporting on suicide.

**Workplace Category – Huon Aquaculture**

Huon Aquaculture have implemented programs that go beyond the normal Employee Assistance Program service provisions to support and grow their organisation and their workers.

Those who identify as struggling or at risk of suicide are given the opportunity for detailed assessments and to be supported as employees to ensure their mental health and risk of suicide is improved or diminished.

The organisation also provides direct support to ensure the rights and mental health of all involved is sound and achieves the best outcomes. Huon Aquaculture have been rolling out Mental Health First Aid training for all of their managers and supervisors to ensure knowledge and skills pertaining to mental health and suicide prevention are known to them and they have direct contact if they are worried about a worker who is at risk.

Huon Aquaculture has more than 400 employees. Within the last 8 months more than a dozen employees have been directly referred for intense support. These referrals have come directly from the supervisors and managers who have completed the MHFA training. Huon Aquaculture have a progressive and early intervention focus for their employees which is an exceptional example for workplaces around the country.

Frances Bender, Huon Co-Founder and Executive Director says of the Award:

“We are truly honored to accept the prestigious LiFE Award. I would like to thank Samara and Lorette from Workplace Health & Wellbeing for providing ongoing, confidential and non-judgemental support to Huon employees.”

“It might sound cliché, but the greatest asset any business has is its people, so to be able to support our people in difficult times or times of crisis isn’t just a good thing to do as an employer, it is the right thing to do as a human being.”

“Most of our people are based in rural and regional Tasmania where there are many obstacles in accessing mental health resources, so as an employer, a friend and a responsible community member, I am proud that Huon can help to provide these resources.”

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“I can’t speak highly enough of Samara and Lorette for their work with the Huon team—undoubtedly it has touched many people’s lives and will continue to so.”

General Background Information for the LiFE Awards

In 2018 Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) is celebrating the 15th Annual LiFE Awards recognising excellence in suicide prevention. The 2018 National Suicide Prevention Conference Dinner will play host to this important event and is a chance for the whole sector to appreciate the innovative work being undertaken by our peers and colleagues.

The Awards are a prestigious national event that attracts nominations from all areas including business, industry, media, community, government, youth research and medicine – all with an interest in suicide prevention. Nominations are received from all over Australia, and we were delighted with the number of quality nominations this year showcasing the exciting and diverse range of work being undertaken within the field.

The nominees range from mainstream programs to local ‘grass roots’ organisations and dedicated individuals. The Awards celebrate the commitment and energy of the nominees and their vital contribution to the reduction of suicide within our communities.

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LiFE Awards Categories and Descriptions

**Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Award** sponsored by LivingWorks Education Australia
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award recognises a unique and creative health program, service partnership or individual that has encompassed the holistic and social view of health and suicide prevention, e.g. the physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities. The award applicant must show how this has been Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander-led and culturally appropriate.

**Emerging Researcher Award** sponsored by Centre for Mental Health, University of Melbourne
Research provides the essential knowledge for, and is a vital tool in, developing effective practices to address factors associated with risk and to effectively respond to the needs of individuals. The Emerging Researcher Award recognises the contribution by an Australian researcher or group of researchers who are early in their career, for work of towards increasing knowledge around suicide and suicide prevention. The researchers should combine research with best practice and generate findings that drive improvements in suicide prevention practice.

**Workplace Award** sponsored by KPMG
The Workplace Award recognises a business or employer with a track record of promoting suicide prevention in their workplace or as a business contributing to suicide prevention within the community.

**Media Award** sponsored by Everymind
The Media Award (includes print, non-print, social media or art) recognises an individual or an organisation that has had sustained coverage of suicide prevention stories, consistently adhered to safe and supportive reporting guidelines and has creatively utilised different mediums or channels to communicate messages about suicide prevention. Adherence to the Mindframe National Media Guidelines for the medium/channel is essential.

**Communities Matter Award (Individual)** sponsored by Wesley LifeForce
**Communities Matter Award (Organisation)** sponsored by Australian Funeral Directors’ Association
We all recognise that when it comes to suicide prevention communities matter. In everyday local communities across the country, individuals and organisations are doing incredible things, often in a voluntary capacity with limited access to resources. And yet they achieve great change and gain momentum around suicide prevention. The organisation award recognises the very grassroots work being done each and every day across a local community, while the individual award recognises a single person making a significant difference or contribution when it comes to suicide prevention.

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**Leadership Award** sponsored by Suicide Prevention Australia
This award is designed to recognise point in time leadership within the judging year that is above and beyond day to day operations or suicide prevention initiatives. Examples of this could include the introduction of an innovation that has significantly changed an approach or contribution to suicide prevention outcomes, significant positive individual impact and influence on a wider community, innovative partnership developed to encourage collaboration and collective impact, contributed to a high degree of financial/strategic turnaround of their organisation in relation to suicide prevention.